



SOME TRENDS OF VIETNAM'S THEATRICAL ART DESIGN IN THE CURRENT PERIOD

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Theatre is a kind of synthetic art. Theatre contains literature, music, painting, sculpture, dance, cinema...and actors' performance, with the direct participation of the audience, in which theatrical art design contributes an important part. The theatrical art design is independent, at the same time is a part of the overall theatrical work. Thus, it possesses the richness, diversity, with philosophical, aesthetic, historical, ethnographic, sociological, political, ethical, religious meanings...Along with that, theatrical art design also brings about human emotions such as: joy, sadness, love, anger, aspiration, dream and hope. Theatrical art design is a spiritual and material world, expressed by the artists' creativity on the stage in front of live audiences and the audiences also directly make creativity with the artists. The artistic elements when participating in the stage must be dominated by theatrical properties, therefore, they bear a different color to support the performing of the actors. Theatrical fine arts is one of the constituent factors, assisting in making up the visual elements and partly contributing to the artistic effect of the show.

Art design participates in the stage with the role of creating space, time, setting, and supporting actors' performing. Therefore, the theatrical art design is the supporting condition for the performing art, in which the scenes themselves through colors, lines and perspectives also contribute to the artistic factors of the play. That means, theatrical art designers must apply theatrical visual arts to the stage to create the stage space. In other words, the art has been theatrical, the art design appears on the stage and adheres to the characteristics of the stage.

Art space is created by the artists by lines, colors, space, lay out...with their own methods to create dimensional space for the paintings. Designing theatrical art space basically complying with those principles. However, we also learn that the stage space is immensely, but the specific space of the stage has a certain limit, which is the limit in the architectural structure of the theater, the stage...

Along with this, the space in theatre is understood as the place that includes two elements: space and people. The space on the stage must have activities of people and the set design which creates the scenes to express the content - ideas and art of the performance. The space on the stage is designed with the participation of human activities. Lack of either of these factors, space is just a dead space, it will make no sense.

To the audience, the space and time on the stage is to convey the life of the characters in the plot. This is an issue given out many challenges to theatrical art designer that needs to be seriously taken. Because it not only creates hints about the space and time of the stage, but also shows the ability of creating the play and is the living space of a play. From the performance of the actors, showing the characters in combination with the scenes to set convention with the audience the spaces that are forming on the stage. At that time, the audience hypothetically figure out and accept those spaces called hypothetical spaces, which are presented concretely, or metaphorically, sometimes abstractly in one way or another on the stage.

Theatrical art design also participates in solving the problem of time in the play on stage. As we know, there always exists two kinds of time in theatre: the time of the content realization of the performance taking place on the stage (which happens over a long period of time, this time is reversed and set up according to the director's staging) and the time that specifies the amount of time of the performance (taking place in a short and irreversible time). Dealing with this parallel existence requires art designers to have hypothetical creations, defining the symbolism of theatrical art, stage time in which the play take place. The time in the show is sometimes the moment of dawn, sometimes is late afternoon, sometimes is an exciting summer, or a cold and sad winter, the time of the show can return to the years of history, sometimes is the moment of contemporary life...The time in the play was variable in accordance with the regulations of the story, the art designer is free to have creation in such diversified hypothetical time.

The three basic factors such as dramatic events, dramatic conflicts and dramatic actions have formed space and time of the stage, one of the typical elements of theater. For the creators of a play, space and time are the doors for director and art

designer to open up and discover in order to build scenes and artistic images. The stage space is unlimited, meanwhile the specific space of the stage is limited. Structures for performance in space and time are the stage and performance night. A theater with a fixed structure for every play, either with an almost real decorative structure for each scene, each play, or different schools and traditions, which must be presented on the stage.

The art elements of a show includes: performance venue, stage, costumes, make up, props...and even the art element exists right in the characters' lines. In addition, it is necessary to have a synchronous coordination of many artistic and technical components: author, script, director, musician, artist, actor, light designer, sound designer, backstage staff...Each component has his own function but is consistent in the expression method.

The role of the art designer is not only depicting the physical spaces through scenes, lights, sounds, sounds...but also evoking psychological space, assumptions in the audience's imagination by voices and gestures of the character as well as the mass (creating spatial lines by body, action, dance), furthermore, costume, props are indispensable elements of art on that stage. costumes, props...through expressing the descriptive, symbolic, descriptive methods...and through which creating a new place, space and time for the show.

When watching the show the audience not only see how the actors' performance is but also see the art of the show through the lay out, perspective, the lines and colors...Both visual arts and art design use colors, shapes, lines to create works for the audience to feel and have excitement with aesthetic feelings. If visual art made through paintings is the work of an artist who works independently, when a picture is finished, no matter how big or small, it becomes a complete, independent personal work that can be used for different purposes such as: hanging in the house, sending it for sale, exhibiting or giving to friends...But to the theatrical art design, when finishing a draft design for the play, it can not be called a work completion because the stage is a synthetic form. To have a complete work, sketches on paper must be staged by the director and the actors work on it. That means, the sketch must be made into the set that is presented on the stage. When the play is introduced to the audience, it will become a complete theatrical work. Therefore, the artist must have knowledge of many types of art such as painting, sculpture, architecture, interior decoration, exterior, industrial design, graphics, fashion, and make up... moreover, he must understand backstage technology, system of curtain, lighting...

The set on the stage is not a simple still painting of the artist. It's a moving three-dimensional work completed by the actors' performance. On the stage, the actor is the "center" who convey the plot of the story to the audience. However, the art on stage plays a very important part to support and highlight the roles on the stage. Apart from the sets as the background, an effective supporter for the actors' performance, the theatrical art design has encapsulated within itself the unity of the creative intentions of the director. Therefore, the art design itself has contributed with the director to create the form for the play.

The co-creation process between the artist and the director is turning the words from the literary script into real-life images, filtered by lines, colors, materials... and put on the stage. The theatrical art designer conveys the director's idea into visual language to build the spaces expressing the content the work - the director's intentions by choosing his own methods to express the art that creates the integrity of the content and the art of the show.

Vietnamese theatre with two typical types of Tuong, Cheo, from the early stage up to now, has existed for over a thousand years. In the social conditions from the beginning, folk artists all over the country with simple props and costumes have gone to the courtyards, the markets...even at any space that is convenient for both performers and viewers. Along with the development of those two types of art, the theater art design also has progressed every stage, well accepting different cultures. The national theater itself has formed a conception of spatial expression, or in other words, the space is changed thanks to the folk artist's behavior towards objects in the performance environment. It can be seen that, since

ancient times, the national folk theater, although there is no concept of space scene, is still considered to have formed the stage space due to the convention in theatre mentioned above. The current stage art design inherits a lot of art methods originating in the world and also from traditional art left by the predecessor. In the history of theatre, art design has set a landmark and is recognized as an indispensable part of Vietnamese Theatre.

Having agreement on the tendency of inheriting the art design in the traditional theater, creating trends in drama art design, the artists today feel confident because they have a base on the precedents' experience...In addition to inheritance, the recent generation of artists has formed creative design methods. With the creation of new methods combining with the inheritance has brought a certain success to the play, contributing to define the artistic role of the play and affirm that the theatrical art designer has a co-creative position with the director.

In the current socio-economic conditions, the theatrical art designer is forced to adapt to all circumstances in order to create art methods to show the form of the play. Theatrical art design today has explored the ways of expression, creativity, to accompany with the director to "create" the second life for the literary script to become a play, through art methods contributing to the development of theatre.

It can be seen that most of theaters in Vietnam have been sharply influenced by the Western structure of the Renaissance period. The space in the theater with the structure in which the audience look in one direction, one side creates a two-dimensional performance space on a plane. At present, there is a modern element that is the rotating stage floor, however, lacking of mechanical and manual drawing floor system, the stage does not have basement to bring the scene up or the pole to bring people down from the ceiling which much limits the creativity of the close-realistic depiction space of the artist and director. The theatre is increasingly developed according to the intellectual needs of the people, so it requires a renewal of the form and the way of staging. Among the general difficulties of theater structure, using the realistic depicting method of today artist is no longer the optimal choice for the play. Artists have turned to the tendency of symbolic art design to deal with the complex and spatial contexts in a play. The supposed symbolic nature makes the scene very light, mainly to inform the viewer of the place, time, and other circumstances of the action, which is the language of the characters and the general content of the play. The artist chooses the reducing method, choosing the specific points of the space needs to be described and find out the typical details, few details but with high generalization, expressing the effectiveness for acting. This is a treatment that inherits the traditional stage, but does not apply mechanically, combines the convention of space and time, so that the scenes are continuous and can be changed directly on the stage or accompany with the actors during their performance. Convention, typical assumptions of the drama have been shown clearly and profoundly with the coherence from intentions to expressions. The current trend, spatial convention, creativity and discovery of new things by the meaning depiction method have been selected by the director to bring in the theme of thought that is enhanced to be one of the supreme purposes of the play. In a number of art designed works following the above trend, we have encountered many times the creativity with its own ideas contributes to clarifying the director's intentions and staging methods. The good thing of the theatrical art designer is that he knows how to reconcile design ideas to both suit the script, meet the needs of the director, and also show personal creativity. This is also the result of the training process, constantly creating and integrating with contemporary society to have successful plays and bring in visual effects to the audience.

We can see that, in art design creation today, we can basically focus on three tendencies:

First is the tendency of inheriting tradition.

Vietnamese traditional theater with various types of Cheo, Tuong belong to Eastern stage system. With the conventional standard from Hat Boi singing with a table and two chairs, all the movement and performance of the actors showing the space on the mountains and on the ground... With symbolic set design, the scene is very simple, mainly a few small platforms to assume it as a furniture, sometimes a bed, a mountain or a boat... Inheriting tradition with the use of the simple scenes, so the platforms are conventionally created the space with the support of actors' actions. This is a treatment that sharply inherits the traditional Vietnamese theater that Tuong and Cheo often use. An actor's performance technique has defined "sets" that constitute the mood. The way to process space through the performers' ability to process space and along with it is the time in verbal language, body language. Thus, through the actor's performance, using mood symbols to express the space of the play. Artists use this method with a treatment of creating neat and empty stage which is often applied to the productions with a lot of space and too many timelines. They do not place heavy emphasis on the scene but let the actors create space and time to show the actor's ability in performance. The trend of empty, simple space requires the sophistication and creativity of actors' performance. At this time, art design has the role of using the description, evoking convention... Because of this simplicity, it requires the artist to grasp the spirit of the play, the performance layers, the mood of character, in the circumstances, in a dramatic event...to describe sometimes with just a sketch, an object, a color... That is the subtlety of describing the idea, depicting moods in traditional Eastern art in general and in Vietnamese theatrical art in particular. The difficulty of this trend is the sophistication, at the same time the simplicity, almost with

none of the scenes expressing context, space, material time, space, psychological time, which will lead to the absence of the stage art scenes in many plays, this will make the audience feel of visual familiarity, seeing nothing on the stage, that is in the show, the art design creates basing on inheriting traditional theatre art, empty space and hypothesis. This also contributes to making stage go down, while the need for the new thing is always required on the stage in general, in the stage art design in particular.

Second, designing open space, non-specific time.

The main feature of this approach is the combination of realism and hypothesis. This is the current trend when the theater structure has a rotating stage floor. The sets are mainly the platforms creating cubes, pieces through assembly and connection. The audience have a feeling that it is a big scene but in a moment, it becomes somewhere of a specific place when the stage is turned around. The main space here is highlighted by the central platforms, the "ground" for the character to appear at the corners of the stage. The space that becomes the ground on the stage opens up the directions for the actors' movements. That appearance does not need to be defined from where and when, the story just flows to highlight the details. The trend of open space and non-specific time creatively exploits the set transition technique that the rotating stage brings in to create different spaces. This is in line with the mechanical system of the theater for the student art generation. It also gives a "repeatable" creativity when in the series of plays, the sets appear with some platforms in the middle of the stage. The geometric platforms are assembled together to create many up and down lines for the actors. Each shooting angle will be a different space with the space above with almost nothing, with just one or two small platforms for the actors to sit on. A shooting angle with the front of the platform facing the audience is covered with green and brown color will be the space in the garden or in the forest. A shooting angle with the front of the white platform is the interior space in the house...The actors keep acting on the platform, in the forest, sometimes leaves fall or the sound of streams gurgling. In the interior space of the house, the actor with the props are notebook or the night lamp on the platform. To take advantage of the rotating stage when using a central common point leads to a similar repetition in the form of the play.

Third, the Design of Digital Space.

Contemporary theater art today, apart from the methods of real depiction, convention, symbolism, descriptive convention...the artists are also "in tune" with the digital age. Theatrical art designer has had other artistic methods in creation that can bring technical means into the modern stage to help transiting sets quicker, support for the acting method, showing the director's staging...Therefore, with the transformation and development in a remarkable way today when science, technology and technology have helped the theatrical art designer reach new limits, creating all kinds of large spatial contexts, thoroughly serving all creative ideas of directors.

The digital spatial trend of the contemporary society, the application of high technology in stage design is also a good trend in the integration period. Actors step out onto the stage, opening the door, then the image of the door opened allows the actor to enter the real-life internal space which is calculated to match with the actor's actions. Led screen, projector are arranged intertwined in the scene to effectively support it. Applying digital technology to help actors perform in virtual space but bring audience satisfaction in the space with sets on the stage, bringing in a surprise when creating the space of the imagination, the space of the mind with the light efficiency that was inherently unique to cinema.

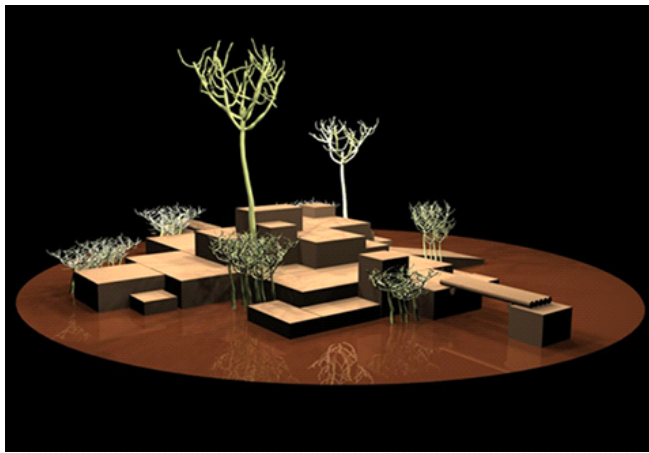
It can be seen that, at this time, in order to create works well, the theatrical art designer must know and master the technology. Technical factors will contribute a great part in renewing and enriching the stage space and the art design of the stage. Applying modern technology to theatrical art design in general and theatre in particular will create effective artistic effects, the work of the current stage art designer needs to supplement knowledge to use the application of modern science and technology, turn it into an effective tool for his work. All creations supported by science and technology must be in compliance with the creation principle in harmony with the other artistic elements that make up the show.

The present contemporary trends in the world always brings dynamism with many unique, new, and modern idea experiments in the process of accessing and conquering the audience. The Vietnamese theater also welcomes international experimental theatrical festivals, showing that the contemporary society today receives many experiments on the stage, bringing in a lot of experience. Stage background with more shimmering, fanciful and more modern effects. The content has little dialogue but more images, the body movements are used to convey the message of the work to the public. However, it can be realized that, the contemporary experience sometimes causes a separation from the traditional stage, which is inconsistent with the customs, and there exists both good side and bad side.

Theatrical art design has developed, exploited and created the content and form of expression, thereby partly refreshes itself and escapes from the stagnant and rigid way of thinking that has become a habit. There are also experiments with many forms of combination, blending with various types of physical acting, circus, dance, music, singing drama...to bring novelty, however, all experiments usually have both success and failure. The contemporary experimentation is

always welcome, integration and challenge. When integrating and creating, it needs to be selective and should not be an experiment passed by without the imprint.

Literature and arts in general and theatre in particular are the mirrors reflecting the reality of life, and at the same time is a warning bell for people. Through the theatrical art works, combining with actors' performance diverse circumstances and scenes, situations that portray human's personalities and destiny have been truly, lively reproduced, which is both specific and highly generalizable. From the diversity and richness in the way of expressing the art design, the sets have also contributed a great part to Vietnam's Fine Arts.



Stage design model “Booth absent” - Theatrical art designer by Vu Cam Nhung



Stage Design Models “Drugs of everyone” - Theatrical art designer by Huynh Tan Phat

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